



July 3, 2014

2522 32nd Street
Santa Monica, CA 90405

Attn: Mr. Jan-Peter Flack

Subj: Four Aces Movie Set - Impacts and Mitigation

Dear Mr. Flack:

This letter provides an existing conditions update, impact analysis, and recommended mitigation measures for the operational phase of the Four Aces movie set (project) at 14499 E. Avenue Q in the County of Los Angeles, east of the City of Palmdale. The project was constructed at the southeastern corner of APN# 3029-010-009 in the late 1990s, and consists of permanent interconnected movie sets made to appear as a motel, diner, and gas station. The developed/disturbed area of the property covers 0.7 acres of the 6.15-acre site. In 1998, a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) was filed to legalize the use, but the permit was denied for inactivity in 2002. The requested CUP would legalize the use of the existing movie set but no additional improvements to the property are proposed at this time. The project is within Big Rock Wash Significant Ecological Area #48. A Biological Constraints Analysis (BCA) (Envicom Corporation, March 10, 2014) for the property was prepared and submitted to the County for review in March 2014. The impacts analysis provided herein relies upon the existing biological conditions information in the BCA as well as the supplemental existing conditions information provided in this letter.

EXISTING CONDITIONS UPDATE

The project BCA includes the results of a biological survey of the subject property that was conducted in February 2014. Due to the early timing and the very early growth of some species that were found during the February survey, an additional biological survey of the property was conducted in March 2014. This survey was conducted following submittal of the BCA to the County. The findings of the second survey are presented in this letter to the extent that the survey provided additional existing conditions information not provided in the BCA. Of note during the second survey were nine (9) additional plant species that were not evident or that were not identified during the February survey, including Fremont's pincushion (*Chaenactis fremontii*), Wallace's woolly-daisy (*Eriopyllum wallacei*), western tansy-mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*), Eurasian tansy-mustard (*Descurainia sophia*), tall tumble-mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), spiny hop-sage (*Grayia spinosa*), club-fruited evening-primrose (*Chylismia* [\leq *Camissonia*] *claviformis* ssp. *claviformis*), desert calico (*Loeseliastrum matthewsii*), and Cooper's box-thorn (*Lycium cooperi*). Two additional wildlife species were also observed, including western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*) and California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*).



The BCA discusses (on page 14) a small white-flowered plant that was found during the February survey and the potential for this plant to be the white pygmy-poppy (*Canbya candida*) [CRPR 4]. This small plant was briefly observed but could not be relocated for identification during the February survey. Based on additional observations of the flora at the site during the March survey, this small white-flowered plant was most likely a very small and early blooming club-fruited evening-primrose (*Chylismia* [\leq *Camissonia*] *claviformis* ssp. *claviformis*), which is a non-sensitive species. Regardless, *Canbya candida* was not found at the site during the second survey, which was conducted during the species' blooming period.

Also, based on further field investigation during the second survey, pooling of water appears to be much more limited in extent and duration at the site than initially thought. Evidence of this included stormwater flow patterns, the limited extent of soil cracking, which was the only clear indicator of temporarily pooling, and the dominance of four-winged saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) at the site, which does not tolerate inundation lasting more than 24 hours.

IMPACTS

This impact analysis is based upon standard CEQA thresholds of significance for biological resources, as provided in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the existing cleared area around the movie set is sufficient for fire protection and that Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) will not require additional fuel reduction that could extend into undeveloped natural habitats. The following potentially significant impacts to biological resources could result from the proposed use of the Four Aces movie set.

The natural habitats in the vicinity of the movie set include Joshua tree woodland and Big Rock Wash, which are considered sensitive by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Big Rock Wash is also a corridor for wildlife movement. Special-status plants have not been found and furthermore are not anticipated to occur within the natural habitats on the property or within the developed/disturbed area in the southeastern corner of the property containing the movie set. Also, no special-status wildlife species are expected to inhabit the developed/disturbed area, although the sensitive habitats on the property and in the surrounding area could potentially support special-status wildlife species, including species that are listed under the Federal and/or State Endangered Species Acts, and species that are State Species of Special Concern or California Fully Protected. These potentially occurring wildlife species may occur as residents or they may occur only rarely or occasionally on a temporary basis (a list of potentially occurring wildlife species is provided on page 18 of the project's Biological Constraints Analysis (Envicom Corporation, March 10, 2014)).

As project activities would be restricted to the existing developed/disturbed area containing the movie set, the proposed use of the movie set would not result in loss or destruction of sensitive habitats or mortality or injury to individuals of a special-status wildlife species. However, given the proximity of project activities to the sensitive habitats, the potential exists for incidental encroachment of personnel, vehicles, and pets into these areas, which could result in disturbance to sensitive habitats and/or take including mortality, injury, harassment, or disturbance to individuals of a special-status species, if a special-status species is present. Also, if not properly managed, food-related trash associated with the movie set operation could attract predators such

as common ravens to the area in greater than natural numbers, which could have significant adverse affects on a special-status wildlife species, if present. On these bases, the operation of the movie set could potentially result in significant, but mitigable, adverse effects on sensitive habitats and special-status wildlife species.

The project would involve the occasional use of outdoor lighting and amplified sound when filming in outdoor areas during nighttime hours. According to the Applicant, outdoor lighting associated with filming would be restricted to the movie set and the immediate exterior of the movie set, and filming would not involve loud outdoor sound or the lighting of desert habitats. However, if not properly controlled, outdoor lighting associated with filming could result in light trespass or glare into sensitive habitats surrounding the site. Also, due to the generally low background noise levels in the area, amplified sound would be audible from sensitive habitats, including from the Big Rock Wash wildlife movement corridor. Light trespass or glare from outdoor lighting and amplified sound within outdoor areas especially if routine and for prolonged periods during nighttime hours could be disruptive to the normal behavior of some special-status species and could cause some species to avoid the area, which could have adverse effects on wildlife movement along Big Rock Wash. The impacts of outdoor lighting and amplified sound on special-status species and wildlife movement along Big Rock Wash would be potentially significant, but mitigable.

MITIGATION

The recommended mitigation measures provided below are designed to avoid and reduce the encroachment of personnel, vehicles, pets, light trespass, glare, and loud amplified sound into sensitive habitats surrounding the developed/disturbed area containing the movie set. Implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce potentially significant impacts to sensitive habitats, wildlife movement, and potentially occurring special-status wildlife species to less than significant levels.

- MM 1:** The Applicant shall maintain a permanent fence along the northern and western boundaries of the developed/disturbed area containing the movie set in order to prevent and discourage encroachment into adjacent sensitive habitats. Permanent signage shall be posted at the perimeter of the developed site to inform personnel of the sensitive status of the Joshua tree woodland and Big Rock Wash, as well as the presence of the Big Rock Wash Significant Ecological Area. Signage must also prohibit access by domestic pets with or without leashes in the sensitive habitats. Prior to approval of the CUP, the Applicant must submit a plan for the design and installation of the required fencing and signage to the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (LACDRP) for review and approval. At the discretion of the LACDRP, the existing barbed wire fencing at the site may be considered adequate to prevent and discourage encroachment. LACDRP shall conduct site inspections to ensure that appropriate fencing has been installed and that the permanent signage has been posted. The installation of the required fencing and signage must be completed before issuance of a CUP.

- MM2:** All food-related trash shall be disposed of in predator-proof closed containers. Permanent signage shall be posted to remind personnel to dispose of food-related trash in predator-proof closed containers. LACDRP shall conduct site inspections to ensure that the permanent signage has been posted.
- MM3:** Prior to issuance of a CUP, the Applicant shall prepare and submit an environmental education handout to LACDRP for review and approval. The environmental education handout shall address, at a minimum, the following topics: the presence and environmental significance of the Big Rock Wash Significant Ecological Area; the sensitive status of the native habitats surrounding the project site; the potential adverse effects of encroachment of personnel, vehicles, and pets into sensitive habitats; the potential adverse effects of light trespass, glare, and excessive noise during nighttime hours on wildlife and on wildlife movement; and, any permit conditions and mitigation measures required to avoid and reduce potential adverse effects on sensitive habitats, special-status wildlife, and wildlife movement. The environmental education materials shall be distributed to all lessees and key personnel managing the facilities or personnel at the site. Upon receipt of the environmental education materials, all lessees and key personnel shall indicate by signature that they have received and understand the environmental education materials. The Applicant shall maintain the signatures on file to be provided at the request of the LACDRP.

If you have further questions, please contact me at Envicom Corporation at (818) 879-4700.

Sincerely,



Jim Anderson
Senior Biologist